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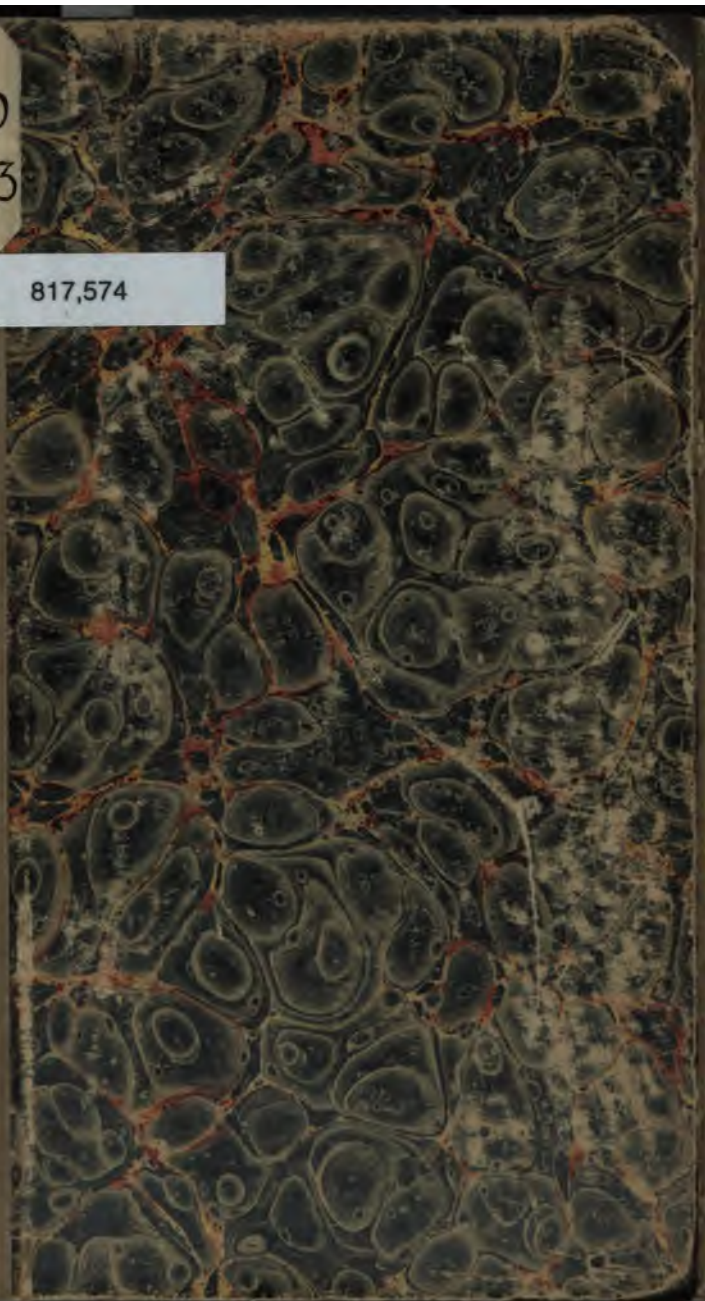
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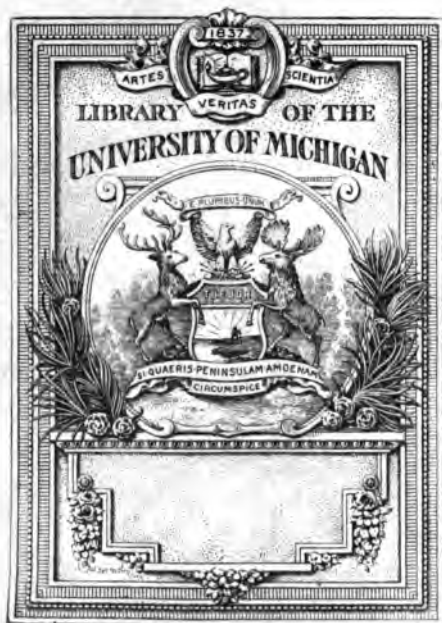
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Mayeda-Outline of the true sect
of Buddhism





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AN
OUTLINE OF THE TRUE SECT
OF
BUDDHISM

BY
Y. MAYEDA.

TRANSLATED BY

S. SONODA.

FOR FREE DISTRIBUTION.

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THE BUDDHIST PROPAGATION SOCIETY.
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—
1893.

P R E F A C E.

The purport of this little work is to show the cardinal doctrine of the Shin-shū, now the most important and active sect in Japan.

It is a translation from a Japanese original written by Mr. MAYEDA, a priest of the Shin-shū, Hongwanji branch, at the request of the Buddhist Propagation Society, for free distribution at the World's Fair of Chicago.

When I was requested by the Society to undertake the translation, the time allowed was so short that I fear the work is but imperfectly done.

I have made a free rather than a literal translation ; in some parts amplifying the original and in other parts curtailing it, so as to make the work more intelligible to foreigners.

I am very much indebted to Mr. E. B. LAMBERT for his kind revision.

SHUYE SONODA.

Kyoto, Japan, 27th July, 1893

AN OUTLINE OF THE SHIN-SHŪ OR "TRUE SECT."

The complete name of the Shin-shū or "True Sect," is Jo-do Shin-shū or "True Sect of the Pure Land."

The two great Divisions of Buddhism are those of Jo-do and Sho-do.

The term Jo-do, or Pure Land, is antithetical to that of Sho-do, or Holy Path.

The Ten-dai, Ke-gon, Shin-gon, and other sects, belong to the Sho-do.

The Sho-do doctrines teach that Holy Consciousness, or Buddhahood, can be reached by self power, i.e. reliance on one's own works ; while the special aim of the Jo-do is to be born in Amitābha Buddha's Pure Land, (Sukhāvati) by relying entirely on his power.

So the name Jo-do, or Pure Land is given to the Sect.

Relative to the doctrine of being born in the Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha there are several thesis.

One System teaches that we may be born in the Pure Land by practicing various good works ; another teaches that we may reach the Pure Land simply by the merit of calling upon his name.

These two Systems combine self-power with the power of Amitábha Buddha, and are not in conformity with the tenets of the Shin-shū or True Sect.

The Shin-shū teaches that we may be born in the Pure Land only by relying upon Amitábha Buddha's power of original prayer, rejecting the merits of self power and the mere repetition of Buddha's name.

The former two systems are called expedients, but the third only, that of this sect is pure Taraki, or full dependence on Buddha's power, and this Taraki evolving the Great Truth of Buddhism has given the name Shin (True) to the Sect.

Although, as mentioned, there are several systems of Buddhism they are all included in the two great divisions of the Pure Land and the Holy Path.

Both include the truth and the expedients, so the founder of our sect distinguishes clearly between these by making the classification of Two Pairs and Four Folds (Ni-sō Shi-jū), namely :—1st. The lengthwise going-out (Shu-Shiutsu), that is the attainment of enlightenment by the circuitous way during many periods. 2nd. The lengthwise

passing-over (Shu-Chio), that is the attainment of enlightenment in the present existence. 3rd. The crosswise going-out (Ō-shutsu), that is the attainment of birth in a region adjoining the Pure Land. 4th. The crosswise passing-over (Ō-chō), that is the attainment of birth in the Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha.

The fourth is the only doctrine of our Sect.

According to the doctrines of the Shō-dō (Holy Path) the ordinary way to enter Nirvāna is to give up all earthly affections and passions step by step, and to awaken the mental power by practicing the three Sikshās (San-gaku) or disciplines.—Adhisīla (Kai) or morality, Adhikitta (Jo) or thought ; adhipragūā (ye) or learning.

The Doctrine of the True Sect is, however, different, inasmuch as when we are born in the True Land of Amitābha Buddha we at once enter Nirvāna without following the gradual steps. Hence the name Crosswise passing-over.

There are three authentic Sūtras of this sect : the Dai-mu-ryo-ju-kyo, or the Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha ; the Kwan-mu-ryo-ju-kyo, or the Amitayus-dhyāna ; and the A-mida-kyo, or the Smaller Sukhāvati-vyūha.

These three Sūtras give, in the clearest terms the principles for attaining birth in the True Land of Amitābha Buddha.

The larger Sukhâvati-vyûha is taken as a special text book, as it explains minutely the prayers and enlightenment of Amitâbha Buddha, so that the principles of crosswise passing-over are explicitly expounded.

In China, between the Kan and So dynasties, twelve translation of this Sûtra were made, of which seven have been lost.

Of the five extant, the translation by the Indian scholar of the Tripitaka, Samghavarman (Ko-so-gai) in 210 A.D. is the clearest and most perfect, and is in general use by the priests and teachers of Buddhism.

About seven hundred years after the death of Sâkyamuni Buddha Nâgârguna (Ryû-ju) who was born in the southern part of India wrote the Dasabhâmi-vibhâshâ-sâstra (Jû-jû-bi-ba-sha-ron) in which he fully explains the section Dasabhûmi of the Buddhâvatamsaka-mahâvaipulya-sûtra (Ke-gon-gyo), and in which he commends the system of the Pure Land as the clearest and most accessible means to attain Nirvâna, while he speaks of the other doctrines as difficult and circuitous.

One hundred years earlier, lived Asvagosha (Me-myô) who wrote Mahâyâna-sraddhotpâda-sâstra expounding Mahâyâna doctrine.

At the end of the Sâstra he roughly explains the doctrine of the Pure Land, but as the distinction between the truth

and the expedients is not clear we regard Nāgârguna as the first expounder of the Doctrine.

Vasubandhu, who was born in the northern part of India about nine hundred years after Buddha, was the next to expound the Easy Path in a work called Amitâyus-sutropadesa Sâstra (Jo-do-ron).

In China during the Gi dynasty, Donran (485-542) wrote a commentary on Amitâyus-sutropadesa Sâstra (Jo-do-ron-tsu), and explained the full meaning of Tariki (Buddha's Power).

Next appeared Dō-shaku (558-645) during the Zui dynasty. He was an ardent follower of Don-ran, cherished his memory, and, though Don-ran had been long dead called himself his pupil. He wrote the An-raku-shū, in which mention is first made of the Two gates, namely : the Holy Path (Sho-do) and the Pure Land (Jo-do).

He so gave the two great divisions to Buddhism, defining the Pure Land as the only accessible means to the people of the present generation.

Zendo in the To dynasty (613-681) succeeded Do-shaku and amplified his instruction. He wrote a commentary on the Kwan-mu-ryo-ju-kyo, pointed out the true meaning of the text and rejected the misinterpretations of the followers of the Holy Path. He also wrote the Ō-jo-rai-san, Hō-ji-san, Kwan-nen-bō-mon, Han-ju-san, and other

works, in all of which he aims at the extension of the doctrine of the Pure Land. Hence the ascendancy of the Pure Land Gate dates from him.

In Japan, in the reign of the Emperor En-nyū (984) Gen-shin wrote the *Ō-jō-yō-shū*, and is thus considered as the successor of Zen-do.

In the reign of the Emperor Takakura (1175), Gen-kū first established the Pure Land Sect, wrote the *Sen-jaku-shū*, and further developed Zen-do's precepts and system of teaching.

The seven priests above enumerated—Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, Don-ran, Dō-shaku, Zen-do, Gen-shin, and Gen-kū are styled the "Seven High Priests" (*Shichi-kō-sō*).

In India, China, and Japan, there were many persons who preached the doctrine of the Pure Land but almost all were ambiguous in the distinction between truth and expedient.

The "Seven High Priests" were, however, distinct upon this point and preached the crosswise passing-over doctrine explicitly, so that their works are acknowledged as orthodox.

Shin-ran Shō-nin the founder of the Shin-shū or "True Sect" in Japan was born in the third year of Zio-an (1173) of the Emperor Takakura. His father Arinori was a member of the Fujiwara family and an official in the palace of the Empress Dowager.

Shin-ran Shō-nin entered the priesthood at nine years of age under Zichin, the high priest of the Ten-dai sect.

Later on he went to Mount Hi-ei to study more deeply the Ten-dai doctrines.

Though he perfectly understood the meaning and acknowledged the harmony of the three satya (San-Tai), yet he perceived that to attain Nirvāna by the Holy Path was almost impracticable to the imperfect human beings of this world. He therefore went to Gen-kū, one of the seven high priests before mentioned, to study the doctrine of the Pure Land, and, under this master's instruction, he quickly grasped the essential points of the doctrine and perceived that Nirvāna was attainable to all through the Gate of the Pure Land. To follow out Gen-kū's wishes he married the daughter of the Sessho Kwan-baku (Prince Regent) Kujō Kanazane.

This was an extraordinary event in the history of Buddhism, marriage having been forbidden to the priesthood heretofore.

From this dates the foundation of the two systems, Paramārtha-satya (Sir-dai) or Spiritual Truth, and Samōriti-satya (Zoku-tai) or Moral Truth.

In the first year of Shōgen (1207), the priests of the Holy Path became jealous of the daily progress of the doctrine of the Pure Land and slandered Gen-kū and his

disciple to the government. In consequence of this Gen-kū was confined to the province of Tosa, Shin-ran was forbidden to leave Echigo, and the propagation of the doctrine was stopped. After five years when these restrictions were removed by the emperor, Shin-ran Shō-nin travelled through the north-western provinces spreading the doctrine of the sect.

In the first year of Gen-nin (1224) at the age of 52 years, when at Inada in the province of Hidachi, he compiled the Kyo-gyo-sho-mon-rui, or collection of Maxims concerning the Doctrine, Practice, Faith, and Enlightenment of the Pure Land.

In this work of six volumes he enlarged the teaching of Gen-kū and elucidated all difficult points. Truly this work is a collection of the important precepts of the doctrine of the three sutras and the explanations of the seven high priests, together with his own commentary thereon.

As it is the organization of the doctrine of the sect, Shin-ran is justly considered as the founder.

Besides this standard work he also wrote the jo-do-mon-ri-ju-sho, gu-toku-shō, Nyū-shutsu-ny-mon-ge, Son-go-shin-zo-mai-mon, and other works.

Returning to Kyoto he preached there for many years, and died in that city on the 28th November, the second year of Ko-cho (1262), at the age of 90 years. After Shin-ran's

death his youngest daughter Kaku-shin a nun, together with his grandson Nio-shin taught the doctrines of the sect in Kyoto, building a temple to which the Emperor Kameyama gave the name, Ku-on-zitsu-zio-Amida-Butsu-Hon-gwan-ji.

Owing to civil war and internal dissensions in the country, the true faith suffered much, but Rennyo Shō-nin, the eighth in succession (High Priest) from Shinran, by his extraordinary zeal and energy contrived to restore the declining sect, and caused it to acquire considerable influence.

Another successor having performed some service for the Government received the honorable rank of Zyūn-mon-zeki (prince-like-treatment).

At present the Chief Priests are held as Nobles by the Government and are much venerated by the common people, and the sect is rapidly extending in influence and numbers.

The acknowledged branches of the sect are ten in number.

The Hongwanji and Ōtani branches have hereditary Chief Priests who are descendants of the founder Shin-ran, and consequently those branches have the highest authority.

Of the minor branches, the chiefs of some are descendants of Shin-ran's disciples, while a few have been established in

comparatively late years. Of those branches that of Takada is the most flourishing.

The doctrines of the sect consist of the paramâtha-satya (Sin-dai) and Samvriti-satya (Zoku-tai).

The Paramârtha-satya is to seek to be born in the Pure Land by relying on the power of the Original Prayer of Amitâbha Buddha, abnegating self-power.

The Samvriti-satya is to obey the laws of the Government and to practise morality, honoring the institutions of the country in which one lives.

In short:—To have faith in the power of Amitâbha Buddha's prayer; to rest assured of future bliss through that faith; and to lead an upright and moral life here, to the welfare and happiness of mankind.

Such are the requirements of the two satya.

We find the the forty eight Original Prayers of Amitâbha Buddha in the Larger Sukhâvatîvyuha. Of these the eighteenth is the most important. It runs thus:—

“If any living beings, even to the limits of the ten regions, who believe in me with Truth, Faith, and have the Desire to be born in my country, and have even to ten times repeated the thought (of my name) be not born there, then may I not obtain the perfect knowledge.”

The meaning of this prayer is that all beings (throughout infinite space) who earnestly believe in the mercy of

Buddha and his power to save them, may be born in the Pure Land by virtue of such faith.

With this original prayer conceived in his compassionate love, he practiced good works during many kalps (periods) in order to deliver all beings from suffering, and the result was the accomplishment of his great power.

This power is called Amitábha Buddha, and means the perfection and immeasurability of Holy Intelligence and Benevolence.

So whoever has faith in the power of the prayer is rescued by him and born in the Pure Land.

This Pure Land is that which evolved from Amitábha Buddha's power of prayer, namely, the power of Mercy.

The Land which we witness at present (this world) evolved from our fancies and worldly desires, but by rejecting such fancies and desires Buddhahood may evolve the true world by the power of pure intelligence and mercy.

The Pure Land of Amitábha Buddha is, in some degree, such a world, but by virtue of the holy power which causes all beings to enter Nirvâna, it is far superior to those of other Buddhas.

So the sūtra says :—"The Pure Land alone is transcendent and excellent."

The doctrine of this sect, that is the inspiration given to

the followers by the Original prayer of Amitâbha Buddha is the threefold faith mentioned in the original prayer.

1st. Truth. 2nd. Faith. 3rd. The desire to be born in the Pure Land.

Now what is meant by the three-fold faith? It is the state of the mind, not doubting even in the slightest degree, but having a hearty desire for the future birth, bringing to mind Amitâbha Buddha's original prayer. Any one, however ignorant he may be, may obtain such inspiration.

It is nevertheless not the result of self-power, but the influence of the great mercy of Amitâbha Buddha. In other words, it is the reflection of the mental light of Amitâbha Buddha upon the mind; so that it is called the Wisdom of Buddha.

As it is the Wisdom of Buddha, it accomplishes in one moment the ability to be born in the Pure Land of all good works and merits.

This is expressed in the great sûtras as follows—"One moment fulfills the highest merits, and obtains the great benefit for the believer."

The words "great benefit" mean the certainty of being born in the Pure Land and becoming Buddha.

Thus as the followers accomplish immediate belief, they need neither supplications nor actions, nor any practice

of self-power for the future ; but need only to keep in their hearts the mercy of Amitábha Buddha, and invoke his name whenever they are affected by his holy light. This is the " repetition of the thought (of Buddha's name) even to ten times," as spoken in the original prayer. The repetition is, of course, not limited to the number ten, so that the words " even to " are used.

There may be some who repeat the name of Buddha for ten or twenty years or during their whole life, while walking, standing, sitting, or lying down ; while some may do the Nenbutsu, or calling Buddha to remembrance, only once before they die. In short as the certainty of being born is fulfilled in one moment of belief, the next observance is to remember his mercy in heart and invoke his name by mouth.

This is called "Thanksgiving for Buddha's mercy," and is the only formal practice of the sect.

Although in this sect, as is common in the others, the altar is decorated and certain rites performed before it at particular times, as on the anniversary of the death of a relation, &c., yet such is not in supplication for the happiness of the deceased. It is only another form of thanksgiving for Buddha's mercy in accordance with the common ritual of the Buddhist religion, and has no further significance.

Indeed at the present day it is not advisable to perform such rites too frequently as they tend to superstition amongst the uninformed and ignorant.

The doctrines and practices of the sect are therefore, as can be seen from the foregoing, easily attained by any one; ascetic observances (such as leading a hermit's life, freeing one's self from worldly affections) not being considered essential.

Indeed, on the contrary, the followers ought to have communication with the world, so as to discharge their professional and social duties, and help to further the teaching of morality.

This is the Samvriti-sat-ya (Zokutai) or "Moral Truth by general consent."

As to the truth, Sâkyamuni, in the Larger Sutra (Dai Muriojukio) says :—"You should separate yourselves from all evil and select and practice what is good, with due consideration and thought."

"All people of the world, parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, and all relations, should respect and love, and not hate and envy each other.—"You should supply each other's wants, and not be discontented and covetous."—"You should always be gentle in words and appearance, and not be offensive and adverse to each other."

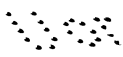
As to the result of such good conduct, Buddha says :—
“The earth will become harmonious, the country prosperous, weapons unused, morality esteemed, and courtesy and humility practiced.”

In short, the principle of the Sam-vriti-satya is to live in the world, have intercourse with the people, and desire the peace and prosperity of the country ; always remembering the mercy of Amitábha Buddha and keeping a compassionate heart.

Therefore the system of the sect is far different from that of those austere ascetics who desire for themselves the future world only, put the present world in oblivion, and look upon the rise and fall of the country with indifference.

Ours is truly a National religion that desires at the same time prosperity in this life and happiness in the next.

The followers of the sect too, though they desire the happiness of the present life, neither employ spells nor supplications of any kind for the purpose of avoiding misfortune and gaining happiness, because misfortunes are the result of bad Karma (actions) already committed (in a previous state of existence), and those portions that can be expunged by the power of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are wiped out as the benefit of relying upon the great mercy of Amitábha Buddha.



According to the general rule the priests of the sect cut the hair short, wear religious vestments, and show the general appearance of bonzes, but since the doctrine is so easy of attainment, and the austere observances of the other sects are not considered essential, they are allowed to marry and to eat flesh and fish, which privileges are strictly forbidden to the priests of the other sects. Thus the priests are allowed to act freely in such matters.

This is called "the manner of non-priests and non-laymen" which was established by the founder of the sect and is peculiar to it alone.

Now as to the Paramârtha-satya (Shindai), there are two benefits :—1st. Becoming in the present life a member of the Samyaktva-râsi (Shō-jō-jū), or body of absolute truth. 2nd. Attaining to Nirvâna (Metsudo) in the next life.

In the first place, the body of absolute truth means the class of beings who will certainly be born in the Pure Land and attain to Nirvâna there in the next life.

They are taken hold of within the light of Amitâbha Buddha, and suffer transmigration no more ; so that they are also called Avaivartikas (Fu-tai-ten), or those who never return again.

They derive the benefit at the moment of putting faith in Buddha.

In the second place, Nirvâna (Metsudo) means extinguish all the passions and transcend the great sea of transmigration.

According to the Hinayana (The Smaller Vehicle) Nirvâna is a state of nothingness, just as an extinguished light, but in the Mahayana (the Greater Vehicle), on the contrary, it is the place where all the passions are extinguished, where is revealed the entire body of Bhûtatathata (Shin-nyo) or absolute truth, and where all merits exist. This is the true meaning of Nirvâna, and is the state of Buddha who accomplishes wisdom and mercy.

As the believers of this sect receive this great wisdom and mercy entitling them to be born in the Pure Land, no sooner are they born there than they attain to Nirvâna, the highest perfection of wisdom and mercy.

This is the pre-eminant benefit of the cross-wise passing-over, far surpassing that attained by any method of self-power.

The essential points of the doctrines of the sect are as stated.

Now, as the system of the Pure Land is founded upon the merciful heart of Amitâbha Buddha and is accessible to the most uneducated and ignorant, it may wear the appearance of shallowness and superficiality. Nevertheless as the Intelligence and Mercy of Amitâbha Buddha were

revealed by the wisdom that attains to the truth of the universe, it naturally contains the most profound principles, and is, of course, in exact accordance with scientific truths, so it is far different from the doctrines of Christianity which are always at variance with science.

At first sight, it may, perhaps, appear to those who do not understand the true doctrines of the Mâhâyana, that Buddhism is allied to Christianity ; but were they acquainted with the profound principles of the Doctrine, they would perceive the superior excellence of Buddhism, and fully understand the " holy calm " that always rests in the hearts of all true believers.

Moreover the general morality taught in the Samvriti-satya is not like that of Christianity, which is biased, and, in some cases, detrimental to the state.

It encourages the national spirit, adapts itself well to the manners and customs of the place it prevails, and maintains the peace of the country.

In such points all, who have any interest in religion, will agree as to its excellence.

Recently Buddhism has been introduced into western countries and has the tendency to spread widely, but the Doctrine that is entertained in some parts of Europe at present is that of the Hinayana, still prevailing in Ceylon, Siam, etc., and not that of the Mahayana taught in China

and Japan. Even should there be in western countries a few who are studying the Mahayana it is in accordance with the doctrine of the Holy Path, whose rules are so austere that they are very difficult to practice and consequently not suitable to the common people; while the Pure Land Gate, in spite of its superficial appearance, embodies the most profound truths and is well adapted to all.

Being then suitable to every-day life and avoiding those superstitions into which Christians are likely to fall, there is no doubt that any European or American who studies the religion will be inspired with its truths, and will gladly devote himself to the propagation of its sublime tenets.

In Japan the sect is in a flourishing condition, the believers becoming more numerous day by day, while those of the other sects are diminishing in number. Indeed we believe the true sect of the Pure Land to be the religion that will attain sovereign power over the world in the future.

This is solely owing to Amitābha Buddha's merciful aid and protection, and is in accordance with the golden words of Sākyamuni: "I especially bequeath this sutra for ten thousand years of the latter day of the law."

THE END.



TO OUR READERS.

This and other two pamphlets have been printed for free distribution in the World's Columbian Fair, and our call for the fund has been liberally answered by our members and friends, of whom we are glad to mention the following names.

- | | |
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